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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to examine the processes and skills involved in helping teachers write narratives about cases rich enough to be useful in teacher education programs. The approach described necessitates collaborative exchanges among teachers and researchers and requires numerous iterations of the original narratives. The report traces the development of four sample cases from their original drafts to their final published accounts. As defined, a case must provide the contextual and historical elements needed by readers to put themselves into the situation with a tolerable measure of its complexity. Four stages in the evolution of a case are proposed: (1) the initial experience when a teacher participates in a meaningful event; (2) the reflective experience, or the act of thinking, talking, and writing about the experience; (3) the reciprocal experience wherein the case continues to develop through dialogue and redrafting; and (4) the collegial experience, the solicitation of commentary from other educators. Also discussed is what was learned about collaborative case writing within the individual stages. (Author/LL)

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Revealing the Mysteries of Teacher-Written Cases

Opening the Black Box

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REVEALING THE MYSTERIES OF TEACHER-WRITTEN CASES: OPENING THE BLACK BOX

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ABSTRACT

REVEALING THE MYSTERIES OF TEACHER-WRITTEN CASES: OPENING THE BLACK BOX

This article examines one way to develop teacher-written cases with commentaries that fosters learning for both their writers and subsequent readers. It requires collaborative exchanges among teachers, scholars, and researchers, and often numerous iterations of the original narratives. The author traces the development of four sample cases from their original drafts to their final published accounts. In the analysis, she proposes four stages in the evolution of a case and frames the discussion of what was learned about collaborative case writing within the individual stages.

REVEALING THE MYSTERIES OF TEACHER-WRITTEN CASES: OPENING THE BLACK BOX

The phone call was from a chemistry professor at a major university. She asked if I would read some cases and journals that she had collected from teachers as part of a two-year grant to provide support for "crossover teachers" (i.e., certified teachers in another discipline) into science. The intent was to produce a casebook written by participating teachers that could be used as a training tool for similar endeavors by other teacher preparation institutions. It was now the end of the first year, the teachers had recently submitted their long awaited cases, and the staff had read them — with much disappointment. Because there was time to make changes in the program for the next year, the external evaluator had suggested involving me as a consultant.

After reading sample narratives I knew why I was asked to help. Though the project's case-writing guidelines had been adapted from materials I had created for one of my casebooks (Shulman & Colbert, 1988), these narratives were superficial, sparse, unfocused, and boring. Moreover, it was difficult to find any value in them for prospective science teachers. The teacher-authors rarely embedded their narratives in an event or series of events as the guidelines suggested, and when they did, there was not enough detail or complexity to learn from or to stimulate a discussion.

When I conveyed my impressions to the principal investigator, she was not surprised. She too thought the narratives were superficial and had concluded that the problem lay with these particular teachers — they simply could not write. As we examined the circumstances under which the teachers wrote their narratives, however, she realized that she and her staff had to assume much of the responsibility. They had provided no support or feedback to the teachers during the entire year.

I begin with this story because it highlights two contradictory misconceptions among teacher educators about who should write teaching cases. Pessimists argue that teachers are unsuitable as authors because

they cannot write narratives complex and compelling enough to be used for teaching purposes. Optimists — like the professor in the story — believe that teachers can just sit down and write appropriate teaching cases without much assistance.

Our experience in editing casebooks by teacher practitioners suggests that the optimists and pessimists are both wrong. Many teachers can write compelling narratives that can be used as teaching cases, but they cannot do it alone. Teacher-authors need the continued support and guidance that comes from regular interactions with researchers and other case writers. They need to produce successive drafts, a process that helps them clarify the issues in the case, make explicit their implicit understandings and rationales, and discover ways to add or expand on details to make their narratives more vivid. When such collaborations occur, the writing process becomes a powerful learning experience for the authors. More important, the resultant narratives are tools that can inform and educate new and experienced teachers.

What are the processes and skills involved in helping teachers write good teaching cases? How much support is enough? Who decides what are viable topics to write about? On what basis do we solicit commentaries that enrich each case? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this article as I describe how the collaborative interactions among case writers and researchers were instrumental in determining how the cases were written in our newest casebook (Shulman & Mesa-Bains, 1990). First, I briefly examine what I look for in a "teaching case." Then, I provide a detailed description of how teacher-written cases evolve collaboratively from an initial premise in the mind of a teacher to a fully elaborated case, complete with reflections and commentaries. This is followed by an examination of several research literatures — from studies of the writing process to investigations of teacher thinking — that serve to illuminate ways in which this collaborative creative process of teacher case writing occurs. In conclusion, I discuss potential implications of this work for teacher education and professional development.

It is not my purpose in this article to provide a case for case methods in teacher education. That has been done more eloquently by others (see, for example, Merseth, 1990; and L. Shulman, in press). I will, however, argue that teacher-written cases can and should serve as an important part of the curriculum in preservice, inservice, and graduate teacher education, as a way of understanding the wisdom of practice from the "insider's" perspective. The past few years have brought an increasing awareness of the importance of hearing "the teacher's voice" (Erickson, 1986; McDonald, 1986; Shulman, 1989; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1990; Walizer, 1990; Atkin, 1991). Yet, with few exceptions (e.g., Ashton-Warner, 1963; Paley, 1979, 1981; Shulman & Colbert, 1987, 1988; Shulman & Mesa-Bains, 1990; Ben-Peretz, 1990; Kleinfeld, 1991), teachers' voices are generally heard only in researchers ' translations through the medium of case studies.

What is a "Teaching Case?"[1]

The cases that I produce are original, teacher-written accounts that can be used for teaching purposes. These cases are not simply stories that a teacher might tell. They are crafted into compelling narratives, with a beginning, middle, and end, and situated in an event or series of events that unfold over time. They have a plot that is problem-focused with some dramatic tension that must be relieved. They are embedded with many problems that can be framed and analyzed from various perspectives, and they include the thoughts and feelings of the teacher-writers as they describe the accounts. Some case writers describe problems that remain unresolved and end their stories with a series of questions about what to do. Others include solutions that may or may not have worked. They all include reflective comments about their accounts that examine what they have learned from the experience and/or what they may do differently in another similar situation.

All stories are not cases. To call something a case is to make a theoretical claim that it is a "case of something," or an instance of a larger class of experiences (L. Shulman, 1986). Asking, "What is this a case of?" (Shulman & Colbert, 1990; Wilson & Gudmundsdottir, 1987) is central to my

collaborative inquiry with the teacher-authors as we work together to craft their subjective experience into "teaching cases" (see below for examples of this kind of inquiry). We develop a shared sense of what this case has taught the writer and could potentially teach others. In this way we can begin to identify the details of the story that may be critical for understanding its meaning and those that are irrelevant. We can also see where the teachers' own emotional responses need to be explored more fully.

The cases have two components: a narrative by a teacher-author and at least two commentaries by educators who represent different points of view — new and experienced teachers, administrators, teacher educators, and educational scholars. These commentaries are meant to enrich the analyses of each case by adding multiple interpretations, not to provide answers to questions raised in the text. Each adds an important perspective to the "conversations" that follow each case. In this article I also provide examples of how I solicit commentaries, which are integral parts of this kind of teaching case.

Interactive Case Development

This analysis was conducted during the development of our casebook, *Teaching Diverse Students: Cases and Commentaries* (Shulman & Mesa-Bains, 1990), collaboratively produced by Far West Laboratory and the San Francisco Unified School District. The task was to create a casebook on teaching diverse students, written by outstanding veteran teachers, that would supplement the district's existing professional development program in multicultural education. It had appeal to district administrators because they, like many other educational researchers, found that effective materials were lacking and traditional methods of multicultural education — generally in the form of lecture/discussion — were often ineffective. They neither change teachers' stereotypes and beliefs about teaching minority children nor assist teachers in adapting their instruction to the needs of diverse learners (Grant & Secada, 1990; McDiarmid, 1990).

The challenge was considerable. Our first task was to conceptualize what we wanted the book to illustrate. We asked ourselves and our advisory group, "What are the most common problems that all teachers in diverse settings face?" This inquiry was instrumental in developing a set of guidelines for case writers that described possible topics for cases and a model for writing the narratives. We then recruited 20 outstanding teachers from the district who were potential case writers. After describing the nature of the project and the kind of commitment that was required (e.g., attendance at several meetings and probable draft revisions), 12 teachers remained in the project — six white, one Latino, one Chinese American, two Japanese Americans, and two from mixed ethnic backgrounds. Data for this research include drafts of their 14 cases, 32 commentaries, individual and group conversations with the teacher-authors about the cases, and discussions with our advisory group and other district personnel around delicate issues embedded in the narratives.

The collaborative work we engage in with teachers is ongoing from the moment we meet. Elsewhere I have written both a description of the guidelines of the casebook and the series of activities we used during the first meeting to help the teachers understand what was involved in case writing (Shulman, in press). For this article, it is important to understand that the interactive process of working with teachers begins at this meeting. We brainstorm possible themes of cases, provide opportunities for writing and presenting cases, and begin to discuss how to craft their narratives into teaching cases. Perhaps most important, however, is an unanticipated outcome — the roots of an identity group.

The reflective inquiry process generally begins after the authors complete their first draft. We provide extensive feedback, both in writing and in person, on issues that need clarification. We also plan meetings for all of the contributors to present their cases to one another and receive collaborative input. Often we distribute successive drafts to all the contributors, so that they can ask questions and make suggestions from the written as well as oral presentation. This process appears to increase the collaborative spirit that the teachers feel about helping one another with their cases.

Several teachers wrote multiple drafts of their cases to address questions that were raised as we received more feedback. Some came from outside experts who were asked to comment on the cases; others came directly from the process of writing successive drafts. It was fascinating to watch how the narratives of the teachers' subjective experiences evolved into "teaching cases." At the beginning, it was often unclear to all of us what these experiences were cases of. Case writing itself became the reflective phase of the original experience. The next section provides selected examples from successive drafts of four cases, so that readers can begin to understand how we helped teachers make explicit their implicit understandings of a situation.

Text Revisions as a Result of Collaborative Exchanges

The excerpts presented below are taken from first and final drafts of four cases in the casebook. Summaries of discussions that stimulated these revisions and rationales for soliciting commentaries are also provided. I present these particular ones to highlight the interactive and iterative quality of the collaboration needed to develop good teaching cases. In the first two examples, I show how conversations on the first drafts stimulated the authors to add descriptions of personal bias and prejudice to their cases. The last two examples describe how the narratives evolved into cases "of" something other than what was originally intended.

Facing Bias and Prejudice

Case #1: Fighting for Life in Third Period.[2] In this case, one of the authors — a veteran, middle class white teacher — wrote a vivid account about her difficulties with four disruptive black high school students, during her first year back in teaching after a 15-year absence. The case opens as she tries to explain to her third period class all of the special opportunities that lie ahead for "qualified" minority students. Unlike her other classes, however, these students seemed uninterested and almost hostile. The four students were introduced as follows:

> Fifteen minutes into the hour, big trouble entered the room. Stout, black, stuffed into a flame-red dress, Veronica sauntered slowly, insolently past me and took a seat as conspicuously as possible. She grinned slyly and said in a loud, husky tone, "What are you, some kind of preacher lady?" The class burst out laughing and three large black boys suddenly jumped out of their seats and began literally dancing around the room, spontaneously rapping about the situation, clapping their hands, called out "Yea, Sister!" This was how I met Veronica, Travis, Lee and "Larry Luv." Before long I had named them "The Gang of Four."
>
> [The case continues as she describes how she felt about her first few days in the school.] I felt I had run into the worst of everything I heard about the ghetto: crude, foul language, rudeness, low achievement, blatant sexuality, continual talk of violence, guns, drugs — the works. What saved me from indicting all the students was the obvious fact that in my first two classes I had wonderful students of all ethnic groups who defied these stereotypes.. . (Shulman, J. H., 1990, unpublished raw data)

When I talked to this teacher about the incident, she told me that she had censored her true feelings about these students in her draft. As she described the specific event, she admitted, "All I could see was black, Judy!" After some encouragement, the teacher added the following to her final draft:

> *These students would have been a fearsome group in any color, but their blackness seemed at first to be a barrier. I was not sure what* ***really to expect*** *from them. Were they truly capable of decent behavior? Did they need some other kind of schooling?* What saved me from indicting all the *black* students was the obvious fact that . . . (Shulman & Mesa-Bains, p. 50)

The rest of the case describes in detail how the teacher took control of the situation, through establishing a personal relationship with each of the four "troublemakers" and developing constructive ways to assert authority in her classroom.

When I first read this account, I hypothesized that it was a case of culture shock and classroom management. Though the teacher's descriptive language of Veronica was indicative of bias, one had to infer it. This "silent" treatment of personal prejudice and racism was consistent in most of the cases. None of the authors dealt with the topic in their initial drafts, and few even felt comfortable to discuss it in our small group.

Mesa-Bains and I were disappointed with the drafts — though not surprised — because we had hoped that we could use some of the cases to stimulate discussions about race, class, and gender. We were convinced that teachers in diverse settings should have opportunities to grapple with their feelings about these issues if they were to be effective with their students (McDiarmid, 1990). But how do you encourage teachers to reflect honestly about their bias? It is simply not "politically correct" to say that you have racist tendencies, nor is it easy to express why.

One of the consequences from the case writing process was to create a safe environment that allowed teachers to recognize and write about things that were otherwise considered "taboo."[3] Because this case writer (and the one below) felt strongly that honestly confronting one's own stereotypes — particularly towards blacks — was critical to becoming an effective teacher in diverse settings, she willingly added her own racist tendency to her account. She was convinced that her admission might make it easier for other teachers to examine their biases.

After the case was completed, we solicited two commentaries: one from a black scholar and the other from a white teacher who, among other things, commented on the importance of the way the teacher candidly confronted her stereotypes of blacks. As one of the commentators, Gloria Ladson-Billings, said, "Would that more teachers would confront these racial and cultural taboos." Acknowledging differences (and the

apprehensions we have about differences) is a key step in making the classroom a more humane and equitable place for all students" (p. 50). The excerpt from the next case has a similar theme.

Case #2: Moments of Truth and Teaching Pygmalion. This narrative is also about a middle-class white teacher's difficulty with black students, only this time the context is teaching Shaw's play *Pygmalion* to an inner-city high school English class. In her introduction to the case, the teacher reflects back to her first year of teaching and describes her first impression of the students in her classroom:

> The backgrounds of these students point out deficiencies in their home environments with parental supervision and support being almost nonexistent. Many of these students are foundering and left to persevere as best they can — alone. However, "urban" or not, "deficient" or not, they were kids in my classroom and I believed that I could make a difference.
>
> I still think I can make a difference, but I'm also amazed that the trials and tribulations of dealing with urban students never seems to end. This year's challenge has been the teaching of *Pygmalion* . . . (Shulman, J. H., 1990, unpublished raw data)

During my conference with this teacher about her draft, I had several questions about the planning and instructional components of her case and asked her to elaborate on several topics. In the middle of our discussion, she began to describe her initial discomfort with black students, which apparently she still has to monitor. After my urging, she added an important experience to her case:

> . . . I still believe that, but I'm also amazed that the trials and tribulations of dealing with urban students never seems to end. *I experienced my first pang of racism my second year when I went to hug one of my black students who was sobbing over a personal conflict with a friend. For all my "openness" and "acceptance," I felt myself hesitate. It was only for a second,*

> *but that second haunted me for weeks. I asked myself over and over, "Am I a bigot? Am I prejudiced?" The answer was, "Yes!" . . . Still, six years later, I continue facing challenges related to race and socio-economic status.* The outstanding one this year has been teaching George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*. (Shulman & Mesa-Bains, p. 13)

The author continues to describe in detail her difficulty planning and teaching her unit on *Pygmalion*. The limitations of this article preclude an analysis of the pedagogical failures of this lesson (see instructor's manual, in progress). Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that, although the author was willing to confront her racist tendencies, she was not comfortable enough to use her students' lives as a bridge to understanding the play. "I hoped I could keep the context impersonal," she wrote.

The two commentators, a black educational scholar and a white teacher, praise the teacher's willingness to be reflective. But they also describe some missed opportunities in the teacher's instruction, such as engaging the students in a discussion of how social inequality influences their daily lives and relating the students' knowledge of black English to the play. The commentators also suggest some alternative strategies that the author might have considered and link their comments to the work of such scholars as Delpit (1988).

As in the revised version of *Fighting for Life in Third Period*, the author's reflective comments about her own bias added an important element to this case. One can conjecture that the author was uncomfortable around blacks from the tone of the case. But the author's admission makes it easier for those reading and/or discussing the case to examine both the author's and their own professional behavior.

Careful analysis of both cases also makes apparent how many different kinds of understandings and skills are expected of a teacher in diverse settings. They must know their content and alternative ways to represent the content. They must possess enough cultural knowledge so they can adapt their instruction to the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of

their students. And they must be willing to establish personal relationships with students who may be quite different from themselves.

A Case of Hurt Feelings Becomes a Policy Case

Case #3: An Unanswered Dilemma. This case, written by two Japanese American teachers, poignantly describes the despair that a veteran Asian teacher felt after a group of parents signed a petition requesting that their children — her students — be placed in a different classroom for the following year. The case begins as the teacher reflects on what she had thought was a good year. Her predominantly Japanese-American students had scored well in reading and math on the California Test of Basic Skills; she had covered all the math strands in the state's new math framework, and the children had an enriched fine arts curriculum because of parent involvement. Then the bomb fell:

> Early one spring morning, as I prepared for class, Grace — the PTA president — walked in. Grace was a Caucasian parent and a regular volunteer in my classroom. With just five minutes to class time, she handed me a letter and said, "Don't read this now because it will make you unhappy. Wait until after school."
>
> My puzzled look prompted her to say more. "Some parents felt you could have done a better job teaching our children this year. Do you think you really did a good job?" I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The bell rang, but I ignored it and opened the letter. As I read, tears filled my eyes. I was too shaken to begin class. Instead I went right to my principal Mr. Bryant. (Shulman & Mesa-Bains, p. 93)

The letter, signed by a number of parents, indicated that they had concerns about the way the teacher taught basic concepts in math. They apparently thought she spent too much time with manipulatives and not enough on memorization and traditional paper and pencil tasks. The case continued with a description of how she described her math curriculum to

parents, both at Back to School Night and when they volunteered in her classroom, and that she was never questioned. It ended as the teacher wondered what she had done wrong. She had always kept up with the latest curriculum developments, attended many workshops, and welcomed suggestions from students and parents. Yet now she "was ready to give up teaching. I wondered if I caused the parents to react that way. What did I do wrong?"

Our discussions with the case writers were illuminating. They had found the case cathartic to write, both because of their despair over this incident and because these parents, particularly the PTA president, continued to spread their "poison" to other faculty as the account was being written. Moreover, I discovered that the incident involved much more than she had described in her case. Copies of the petition had been sent to the Board of Education and to other district officials; the principal eventually lost her job, and several faculty meetings were called to discuss how to respond to the parents' intervention.

The teachers and I worked together to decide how to clarify certain issues on the first draft while at the same time maintaining the privacy of the school and the authors. In later drafts, they deleted some descriptions of the teachers' personal disappointment that we felt were redundant and added examples of parental interventions. These changes followed our collaborative realization that the case we wanted to create was not one merely of personal disappointment, but rather a case of faculty/parent confrontations. The following reminiscence, added to the final draft, was remembered during one of our debriefing conversations:

> *My mind raced back to a visit I'd had with one of the mothers early in the year. She had come to me holding a stack of ditto sheets that her daughter had completed in first grade. "Look how much more she was learning last year," the mother had said . . . [When I had described my philosophy of math instruction several months prior to this encounter,] I thought she had heard my message . . .* (Shulman & Mesa-Bains, pp. 93-94)

The commentaries in this case are particularly instructive because of the variety of perspectives that can inform the issues. I solicited five interpretations: (1) by a well-known historian of education who set the context of parents' roles in schools; (2) by another teacher in the school who gave an "insider" perspective to the problems; (3) by a Japanese-American district staff developer who offered a cultural interpretation of what occurred; (4) by the former principal who provided a political perspective; and (5) by a mathematics educator who questioned how new teaching methods were being applied in this classroom.

This case was one of the most delicate to construct, because of the range of issues to include in the case, while at the same time needing to maintain the privacy of the authors. As one of the authors said:

> Writing our case was very therapeutic. In the first draft, we were trying to be very careful to cover what we wanted to say but not reveal too much, because the situation was so uncomfortable. . . . After talking with you [Judy] and the other teachers, we had a better idea what to put in succeeding drafts. . . . It took a great deal of my own pride and courage to write what I did, but I'm glad everyone was supportive. I want the commentaries [from other educators], because I feel we could learn from the variety of opinions. (Shulman, J. H., 1990, unpublished raw data)

Case writing enabled these teacher-writers to move from their subjective, internal ordeal to a more objective, external perspective where they could critically examine what could be learned from their experience. In a similar manner, cases like the ones described in this paper can be valuable tools in teacher education programs — especially in multicultural education — to motivate teachers to speak more objectively about sensitive issues that are gene rally too personal in public.

A Case of Flawed Pedagogy Becomes a Policy Case

Case # 4: A Trip to Hell. The last case is by a Chicano/Filipino teacher, who describes his dismay when a group of 12 fourth graders, part of a large Latino group of youngsters bused into Chinatown, tried to sabotage his instruction during a pull-out Spanish bilingual program. The students were not only hostile, they refused to speak Spanish. In the original draft, the author provided scant information on his teaching strategies, which appeared to be quite poor, and did not include any reflective comments on why the students behaved belligerently.

We had several discussions about this case — with the other teacher-authors, with staff at FWL, with our advisory group, and with prospective commentators — and each conversation produced additional questions. For example, one extended discussion with his fellow teacher-authors stimulated this writer to add information about his instructional plans and their consequences with the students, as well as interpretive comments about why they may have responded so poorly. Other discussions with our advisory group and officials in the district's bilingual department prompted me to raise questions about the compatibility of the district's Consent Decree (which specifies that all classrooms should be integrated) and the state's bilingual program (which mandates native-language instruction for students who are designated limited-English proficient, or LEP). We wondered, for example, why these 12 students, whom the teacher described as rather fluent in English, were given native-language instruction. And if they were in fact LEP, why were they integrated into a Chinese bilingual classroom? Legally, only fluent English speakers — who do not qualify for native language instruction — are supposed to be placed in bilingual classrooms.

As I probed more deeply into the case, I raised these questions with district officials. One deputy superintendent (who is also on our advisory group) said, "We've definitely opened a can of worms here." I spent hours going back and forth between the teacher-author and district officials. Because of the delicacy of the situation, we had to ensure that the details in the case were described accurately. In fact, the case writer was unable to

answer some of my questions and had to seek additional information (e.g., if these students spoke English fluently, why were they given special classes?). We also had to make some ethical judgements about how much ambiguity to leave in the account to stimulate analysis of the issues and whether such ambiguity could embarrass the district. (See Shulman, 1990, for an analysis of ethical issues in publishing teacher-authored cases.)

During the deliberations, we realized that what began as "a case of flawed pedagogy" could be interpreted as "a case of a clash between two political mandates." In the end, a district official and I decided to leave most of the ambiguity in the text, because it raised important issues for teachers and administrators, and to solicit three commentaries that would speak to these questions: First, a scholar, who evaluates district bilingual programs, provided a philosophical and political analysis of bilingual pull-out programs as a framework for his response. Next, an Hispanic educational psychologist approached the account with serious reservations about busing minority students into other schools when they are "used" to achieve ethnic balance in another school, particularly when Latino students are bused in to a Chinese bilingual school. Finally, a teacher offered a practical perspective — criticizing the students' placement but also offering alternate strategies that might improve the teacher's instruction with his students. This case provides opportunities for teachers, administrators, and policymakers to discuss both the political manifestations of the Consent Decree and the bilingual mandate as well as appropriate instructional goals and strategies for pull-out bilingual programs. Because the narrative is situated in a particular context, with real teachers and students, it is impossible to discuss the merits of these programs without also taking into account the needs of students.

Recently, I used this case with a group of district administrators, who began to examine their own programs with new understandings. Before the discussion was over, one of the administrators pounded his fist on the table and said, "We cannot sit idly by any longer and allow these programs to interfere with the education of our students." The case provided the opportunity for these administrators to share knowledge and solve problems together in ways that were previously unavailable.

This case also illustrates that the question, "What is this a case of ?" can often be answered, "Several things." A beautiful feature of teaching cases is their capacity to be read in different ways by different readers.

Learning from Experience Through Case Writing

How can teachers learn from experience? The challenge for teacher education programs is to produce "reflective teachers" who think about and learn from experience. Yet the ordinary school setting does not lend itself to reflection. Too much is happening too fast in the messy world of practice for teachers to take the time to think deeply about what they are doing. "Even when learning has occurred, the speed and solitude often combine to produce pedagogical amnesia" (L. Shulman, 1989, p. 181). Are there any cures for these problems of learning from experience?

Cases of teaching can foster learning from experience for both their writers and subsequent readers. Case writing serves as an occasion for reflection on teaching by the case authors themselves, particularly in collaborative settings — where veterans and researchers discuss the case, ask clarifying questions, and brainstorm what can be learned from the case. These cases then become powerful tools for preservice and inservice education by taking learners beyond their individual experiences and providing opportunities for reflecting their own experience through deliberating on others'.

The research described in this article represents an attempt to examine the collaborative development of teacher-written cases with other case writers and researchers. I propose four stages in the evolution of a case: (1) the initial experience, (2) the reflective experience, (3) the reciprocal or deliberated experience, and (4) the collegial experience. I will frame the discussion of what we learned about collaborative case writing within the individual stages, focusing particularly on the role of the teacher educator/researcher in the process. As the reader will note, I briefly describe the first two stages and elaborate more extensively on the last two stages.

Stages in the Evolution of a Case

Stage I: The Initial Experience. In the first stage — the initial experience — a teacher teaches. She participates in an episode or series of events that she experiences as meaningful. The researcher has no role in this stage.

Stage II: The Reflective Experience. In the second stage — the reflective experience — the initial act of thinking, talking, and writing about the experience moves it to the level of a written narrative. The researcher's role during this stage is to provide the conditions that help teachers select which episodes — in their myriad of experiences — warrant future examination and analysis.

To set the stage for the casebook on diversity, Mesa-Bains and I carefully designed a series of prompts to help teachers make selections among the many stories they had to tell (see Appendix in Shulman & Mesa-Bains, 1990 for the Guidelines to Writers). We also discussed potential topics individually and within small groups with the case writers. At times, we encouraged or discouraged specific topics based on our judgement of the kinds of cases that would help other teachers promote important understandings. On other occasions, we solicited cases on specific themes to fill in content gaps in the casebook. Although actively collaborating, we were more midwives than co-authors. We ultimately relied on the case writer's judgement to select and frame meaningful cases.

Stage III: The Reciprocal or Deliberated Experience. In the third stage the case continues to develop through dialogue and re-drafting. Whereas in Stage II the original experience is the main focus, in Stage III the written case has become the focus of analysis. This phase is often the most enjoyable and enlightening to case writers because it is a thoughtful inquiry into practice.

The role of researchers during this period is to coordinate and direct this inquiry and to establish the conditions for positive reciprocal exchange.

In our individual work with case-writers, we probed unclear issues in the narratives and worked with the authors to examine what could be learned from their experience. We also asked outside experts — such as key district officials and scholars — to critique the drafts for general impressions, accuracy, and "red flags" that could be embarrassing to either the district or the case writers.

We have learned that these reviewers often provide important new information or perspectives that lead authors to revise sections of their cases. For example, when a district official raised questions about the portrayal of district policies, we worked with the case writer to ensure that all information was accurate. If a reviewer misinterpreted part of a narrative, we worked with the case writer to remove ambiguities. The observations of some reviewers added so much to an account, that we sought to represent their perspectives in formal commentaries (see Stage IV, below).

Conversations about the cases were not limited to teacher-researcher interactions. We also scheduled several meetings for the case writers to discuss their cases with one another. Drafts were distributed among the teachers, so they had opportunities to provide critical comments on one another's papers. As Nystrand (1986) found in his study of effective peer review groups in a freshman writing class, the group discussed substantive issues embedded in the accounts. Often, these deliberations stimulated the authors to revise subsequent drafts.

The peer review process was particularly effective during the deliberations about *A Trip to Hell* and *An Unanswered Dilemma*. First drafts of these cases were rather unfocused and left out several important elements. The teachers' comments often reinforced the general feedback and appeared to confirm the need to make appropriate changes.

Our final role as researchers during this stage was to work with an editor to fine-tune the teacher's writing so that the final case was an interesting and compelling narrative that incorporated all the components of a "teaching case" (see above). We worked to maintain the language and

tone of the author and generally made only minor revisions. On two occasions, however, the editor substantially revised an account: (1) she moderated an author's description of a particularly poor teaching episode, because we felt that his original depiction was simply too embarrassing for the case writer; and (2) she reorganized a teacher's draft to make a more interesting narrative. When we showed the authors their edited pieces, they were generally pleased with the editorial changes and relieved that the cases had been examined by a professional editor. One teacher, who had tried several drafts and was still dissatisfied with its organization, enthusiastically commented, "That's the case I had wanted to write ." Other teachers made additional revisions when they felt an idea was not represented adequately. Our policy was that authors had final approval on their cases.

Stage IV: The Collegial Experience. In Stage IV, we develop the collegial experience, as we solicit layers of commentary from other educators. The resultant cases become part of the community of practitioners and scholars and are tools that can inform and educate new and experienced teachers. During Stage III, commentaries and criticisms are private; they are directed at guiding and improving the case itself. In Stage IV, they are public discourse and become part of the broader community.

Mesa-Bains and I chose our commentators very carefully. We solicited commentary from persons who would react to the key issues from different perspectives. We used several ground rules. The first was that each case had to have *at least* two commentaries, one from another practitioner (teacher or staff developer) and the other from a scholar. We also tried to select individuals who could provide additional insights into the different racial and cultural groups represented in the accounts. Finally, we asked persons who shared complementary viewpoints or experiences with the case writer. For example, when a teacher of color wrote a case about the importance of visiting students' families who live in project housing, we asked a white teacher who made similar visits to write a commentary; we did not want white readers to dismiss the case and assume that one had to be a person of color to be welcomed by the families.

To complement this commentary, an anthropologist of color wrote a scholarly reaction about the importance of teachers having an enlarged role in the lives of their students. In general, we asked scholars to look for ways to connect the particularities of a given case to broader research and theory.

We have learned from previous experience with uneven commentaries that we must provide guidance to the commentators about how to write their remarks. Thus we developed a set of guidelines with some background information on the project and specific questions to address in their remarks, such as: What was your general reaction to the way a teacher handled a particular situation? What was good about it? Was the situation typical? We re there any alternative strategies the teacher could have used? We also asked the scholars to link any research on diversity to their comments and list appropriate references. In short, we specified that the most useful commentaries are those which challenged or extended the thinking of the author by raising possibilities that had not been considered.

In our personal interactions with each commentator we emphasized that, while we wanted constructive criticism, we could not allow the case writers to be chastised too harshly in their comments; we had encouraged the writers to be explicit and felt responsible for protecting their self-esteem. On two occasions, however, we received commentaries that were judged as too unkind, and we worked with individual commentators to depersonalize their remarks.

New Understandings from Reconstructed Experiences

In summary, our role as researchers was to provide opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective inquiry, to ask penetrating questions, and to help the teachers construct a compelling narrative that incorporated all of the relevant information. The teachers' role was to write the case, to engage in reflective conversations with researchers and other teachers, and to make any changes that were deemed important. In essence, we explicitly make what Nystrand (1986, p. 48) calls a "producer-receiver contract," in his discussions of the implicitly collaborative nature of all writing. This contract

specifies the joint expectations and shared understandings of both meaning and purpose for the final document.

The conversations between researchers and teachers in our study often paralleled many studies of teacher thinking and cognition, specifically those that use stimulated recall techniques to elicit self-reports of teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions (for a review of 12 of these studies, see Clark & Peterson, 1986). In this type of research, teachers viewed a videotape of one of their lessons and then responded to questions posed by a researcher. What was common among all the studies was that the researchers analyzed and coded the interviews by categorizing the "thoughts" into one of several categories. The purpose of the studies was to understand what the teachers are thinking about as they teach.

As we saw in the previous section, we substitute a teacher's narrative for the videotape as a way to study his or her thoughts and feelings and ask questions based on the events described in the account. Sometimes our conversations triggered memories of key events or reasons behind important decisions that had been either forgotten or ignored. Occasionally, the "real" story of the case was uncovered (e.g., *An Unanswered Dilemma*), which went far beyond the story in the first draft. Together we decided how much to include in the case and what we wanted the case to be about. Unlike cognitive psychologists who use stimulated recall to recover what teachers were "really thinking and feeling" during an event, we harbor no such illusions. Case writing involves far more than recall. Teachers and their collaborators are reconstructing and constructing their experiences and understandings. What emerges is often new understanding that was not available to the writer at the time of the original experience.

Conclusions

I have described one way to develop teacher-written cases with commentaries that are rich enough to be useful in teacher education programs. Unlike those solicited by the chemistry professor at the beginning of this article, our development process is rigorous. It requires collaborative exchanges among teachers, scholars, and researchers, and often numerous

iterations of the original narratives. These teaching cases are not mere anecdotes, tales swapped casually in the teacher's room. They must provide the contextual and historical elements needed by readers to put themselves into the situation with a tolerable measure of its complexity. They must reveal some of the intentions and plans, strategies and tactics, anxieties and exhilarations, so readers can both think and feel their way into the case's challenges.

Some educators have asked why we spend so much time working with teachers and commentators to develop our cases. "Why don't you simply interview teachers and write the narratives yourselves?" they ask. "Why is it necessary for the teachers to do their own writing?" These are good questions, because some very good casebooks have been written by researchers (see, for example, Silverman, Welty, & Lyon, 1991).

My colleagues and I in the Institute for Case Development at the Far West Laboratory, however, are committed to bringing the practitioner's own voice to the literature on teaching. We have recently completed the process of field testing three casebooks: the volume discussed in this article, another on teaching mathematics (see Barnett, this issue), and a third on administrators' dilemmas. Our experience with these and previous casebooks is that practitioners like reading cases by other practitioners. They can identify with them because the accounts ring true and do not lose verisimilitude like many of those written by researchers. Moreover, we believe that case discussions may empower teachers with certain understandings, insights, and empathy that are less likely to occur in more traditional educational settings.

This article exemplifies the active and continuing role of the case editor in all phases of case writing. The editor solicits the case from an appropriate writer; collaborates in crafting the case by raising questions that yield new information and perceptions as the case develops over successive drafts; and carefully glosses the case by inviting commentaries likely to be contrasting and provocative. Without such editorial activity and support, teacher-written cases and commentaries are unlikely to achieve the clarity and power they deserve and their audience requires.

Notes

1. This definition of a teaching case applies only to the cases that I develop. There are a range of cases currently being published, from the 50-page, teacher-authored cases developed by Judith Kleinfeld at the Center for Cross-Cultural Education, University of Alaska at Fairbanks, to the decision-making/problem- solving cases developed by Silverman, Welty & Lyon (1991).

2. The titles of these cases are created by the case writers.

3. The case writers' decision to retain their privacy by being recognized in a list of contributors rather than as authors of their individual cases was critical to the creation of a safe environment. Our guarantee of confidentiality enabled the teachers to write about current dilemmas that otherwise would not have been possible.

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